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The Natural History of Canadian Mammals

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Title/Product name: The Natural History of Canadian Mammals

Author/editor (if available): Donna Naughton

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The Natural History of Canadian Mammals is a wonderful work by Donna Naughton, a biologist at the Canadian Museum of Nature. Previously, Naughton was the principle contributor to the unfinished series, *Handbook of Canadian Mammals*, produced in the 1980s by the now deceased head of the Curator of Mammals for the National Museum of Natural Sciences (currently the Canadian Museum of Nature), Dr. C. G. van Zyll de Jong. At the time, van Zyll de Jong worked with Brenda Carter to produce drawings for the opossums, shrews, and moles, which were published in volume one of the Handbook series. Paul Geraghty worked for over ten years producing additional drawings, of which, those on the bats were published in volume two. In 2001, the Canadian Museum of Nature wanted to revive van Zyll de Jong's goal of having a comprehensive book on Canadian mammals, ensuring Geraghty and Carter's complete drawings would be published for all to see. Naughton agreed to undertake the work with the goal to make a book that is current, comprehensive, yet accessible to all Canadians. Two hundred and fifteen different land and sea mammal species are included in this approximately 800 page work, from the diminutive least shrew to the gigantic Blue whale. Although humans and domestic mammals (dog, pig, sheep, etc.) are within the scope of the book, they are not addressed in any meaningful way as Naughton declares "there are innumerable other texts containing this information." Each species account includes at least one color illustration, distribution map, and series of skull illustrations. There are two separate appendices on skull identification for voles and shrews. Organization is by order, family, and species. Entries are fairly lengthy, with even a somewhat obscure species like the Neartic brown lemming receiving up to three pages, while more common species like the Black Bear can exceed six. The text covers species' description, size, range, abundance, ecology, diet, reproduction, behavior, vocalizations, signs, and similar species. The sections on ecology and behavior will be of most interest to amateur naturalists. Although the text is clearly written by a scientist, it is accessible

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to those without formal training in biology. For more difficult concepts there is a brief, three page glossary in the back of the book. The art work is in color and very well done. Likewise, color is used in the distribution maps, and to distinguish the front and rear tracks of species. In looking at the entry for an American marten, the track information shows the overall shape of the footprint, visible toe and metacarsal/metacarpal pads, and the front and rear track placements relevant to bounding and loping gates. Brief, yet numerous, author references are provided at the end of each entry with the full citations available in a 60 page bibliography at the end of the book. One disappointing feature is that the references are not cited in the text, but rather are provided as an alphabetical list at the end of the entry. This makes it difficult to identify the origin of specific facts. In reviewing other published works on the subject there is nothing comparable to *The Natural History of Canadian Mammals*. The *Mammals of Canada* (Elder, 2011) by Lone Pine Press is a less costly, quick reference, consumer oriented publication. There are more color pictures, but substantially less biological information than in Naughton's publication. Elder's work has a section on top mammal watching areas in Canada and the species are grouped by family under color coded pages. In short, Elder's work is meant for quick consumption, while Naughton's is a complete reference work on the topic. Overall, I highly recommend *The Natural History of Canadian Mammals* for all libraries. It is an indispensable contribution to mammalian literature.

Kevin McDonough

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